DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 399 CG 030 532

AUTHOR Meyers, Steven A.; Kvall, Steven A.; Byers, Kristie; Vega, Natalie; Wedell, Amy; Hichcox, Nanette; Higgins, Sean

TITLE Interests and Career Preparation of Professional Psychology Doctoral Students.

PUB DATE 2000-08-00

NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association (108th, Washington, DC, August 4-8, 2000).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Career Planning; *Counseling Psychology; *Counselor Training; *Doctoral Degrees; *Graduate Students; Higher Education; National Surveys; *Psychology; Teaching (Occupation)

ABSTRACT

This paper considers whether professional psychology programs are adequately preparing graduate students for post-doctoral careers in light of recent changes in the profession. It describes a national survey to assess the perceived adequacy of the preparation that clinical, counseling, and school psychology doctoral students receive for their postgraduate careers. Students (N=882) enrolled in clinical, counseling, and school psychology doctoral programs were surveyed to explore their career interests; satisfaction with preparation provided by their coursework and supervision; and their perceptions of their preparation for work in different professional settings. The survey determined that students' professional interests tended to shift as they progressed through graduate school towards both research and teaching. Graduate students' ultimate interest in research and college teaching was significantly associated with perceived quality of their coursework and supervision. Doctoral students generally believed that their coursework provided them with a good foundation for their postdoctoral careers, however certain courses were viewed as significantly more helpful than others. Clinical Psy.D. students rated their coursework as more relevant to their careers than both clinical and counseling Ph.D. students. Towards the end of their doctoral studies, students from all programs felt more prepared to enter a career in clinical work rather than academia. (Author/JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 447 399

Interests and Career Preparation of Professional Psychology Doctoral Students

by
Steven A. Meyers
Steven A. Kvaal
Kristie Byers
Natalie Vega
Amy Wedell
Nanette Hichcox
Sean Higgins

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S. MEYERS
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG030532

Interests and Career Preparation of Professional Psychology Doctoral Students

Steven A. Meyers Steven A. Kvaal
Kristie Byers Natalie Vega
Amy Wedell Nanette Hichcox
Sean Higgins
Roosevelt University

Citation: Meyers, S. A., Kvaal, S. A., Byers, K., Vega, N., Wedell, A., Hichcox, N., & Higgins, S. (2000, August). Interests and career preparation of professional psychology doctoral students. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to the first author at Roosevelt University, School of Psychology, 430 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605; e-mail: smeyers@roosevelt.edu

Abstract

We surveyed 882 students enrolled in clinical, counseling, and school psychology doctoral programs to explore students' career interests, their satisfaction with preparation provided by their coursework and supervision, and their perceptions of their preparation for work in different professional settings. We found that students' professional interests tended to shift as they progressed through graduate school towards both research and teaching. Graduate students' ultimate interest in research and college teaching was significantly associated with the perceived quality of their coursework and supervision. Doctoral students generally believed that their coursework provided them with a good foundation for their postdoctoral careers; however, certain courses were viewed as significantly more helpful than others. Clinical PsyD students rated their coursework as more relevant to their careers than both Clinical and Counseling PhD students. Towards the end of their doctoral studies, students from all programs felt more prepared to enter a career in clinical work than academia.

Introduction

The landscape of the professional psychologist's workplace has changed dramatically over the past decade (Belar, 1998). Forces such as managed care and increased marketplace competition have impacted the work of clinicians. Similarly, increased use of part-time and non-tenure track faculty positions in university settings affect the job security of many academicians.

In light of these and other significant changes, are professional psychology programs adequately preparing graduate students for postdoctoral careers? Previous investigators have reported conflicting findings. For instance, Tibbits-Kleber and Howell (1987) stated that the majority of clinical psychology graduate students in their survey described their coursework and training in favorable terms. However, other researchers have found that psychology doctoral students often feel underprepared for careers other than clinical work. For example, Meyers, Reid, and Quina (1998) found that many graduate students in their sample communicated that they had received little training for careers in academia; these

CG030532

doctoral students felt insufficiently equipped for teaching and other responsibilities that faculty members assume.

We used national survey data to assess the perceived adequacy of the preparation that clinical, counseling, and school psychology doctoral students receive for postgraduate careers. More specifically, the purposes of the present research were to explore doctoral students' (a) professional interests, (b) satisfaction with preparation provided by their coursework and supervision, and (c) perceptions of their preparation for work in different professional settings.

Method

Procedure and Participants

We mailed research materials to the training directors of all predoctoral internship sites listed in the 1998-1999 APPIC directory (Hall, 1998); we asked site directors to forward questionnaires to their interns. A total of 2,601 questionnaires were distributed; the number of questionnaires mailed to particular sites was based on the number of intern positions listed for each in the directory. A follow-up mailing was conducted to maximize participation. Eight hundred and eighty-two doctoral students enrolled in clinical, counseling, and school psychology programs completed and returned the questionnaire, representing a 34% response rate.

The sample consisted of 622 women (70%) and 260 men (30%). Participants reported their racial/ethnic backgrounds as European American (83%), African American (5%), Latino (4%), Asian American (4%), and Mixed/Other (4%). Students were pursuing PhD (66%) or PsyD (34%) degrees in clinical (73%), counseling (19%), school (5%), and combined (3%) doctoral programs. The majority of participants attended APA-accredited graduate programs (95%) and internships (85%).

Instrument

In addition to providing demographic data about themselves and their graduate program, respondents rated how well numerous aspects of their coursework and supervision had prepared them for a post-graduate career, using a scale of 1 (provided absolutely no preparation) to 5 (provided outstanding preparation). More specifically, we assessed participants' satisfaction with regard to nine areas of coursework (e.g., psychological assessment, psychotherapy, cultural diversity) and four areas of supervision (e.g., research, teaching, clinical practica). Doctoral students used the same 5-point scale to rate the extent to which their graduate training had prepared them for different career opportunities (i.e., academia, clinical settings, managed care environments, conducting business aspects of clinical practice). Using a scale of 1 (no interest at all) to 5 (extremely high interest), respondents also rated their interest in clinical practice, research, and teaching for three times (i.e., their professed level when applying to graduate school, their actual level when applying, and their current level).

Results and Conclusions

We conducted a series of paired-sample *t*-tests to assess differences between graduate students' ratings of their professional interests, coursework and supervision satisfaction, and career preparation. We also conducted a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and subsequent Scheffé tests to assess differences between the ratings of Clinical PhD, Clinical PsyD, and Counseling PhD students.

Doctoral Students' Professional Interests

When applying to graduate school, participants from all programs reported that they were dramatically more interested in clinical work than in either research, $t(881) = 24.35$, $p < .01$, or teaching, $t(877) = 27.52$, $p < .01$. In addition, students in Clinical and Counseling PhD programs reported that they overstated their interests in research, $t(878) = 16.18$, $p < .01$, and downplayed their commitment to clinical work, $t(882) = -2.38$, $p < .05$, in their graduate school applications.

Students' professional interests tended to shift as they progressed through graduate school. Regardless of their program affiliation, respondents became more interested in both research, $t(876) = 7.42$, $p < .01$, and teaching, $t(877) = 13.25$, $p < .01$. Multiple regression analyses indicated that graduate students' current interest in research was associated with the preparation that they received in both methodology and statistics coursework (beta = .27) and during their thesis and dissertation supervision (beta = .19), R square = .15. Similarly, graduate students' current interest in college teaching was related to the supervision of their teaching (beta = .11) and preparation for teaching that they received (beta = .34), R square = .17.

Doctoral Students' Satisfaction with Coursework and Supervision

Consistent with past research (Tibbits-Kleber & Howell, 1987), doctoral students generally believed that their coursework provided them with a good foundation for their postdoctoral careers; however, certain courses (e.g., ethics, personality, psychopathology, assessment) were categorized as significantly more helpful than others (e.g., biological and social bases of behavior). As indicated in Table 1, Clinical PsyD students generally viewed their coursework as more relevant to their careers than both Clinical and Counseling PhD students. However, few significant differences were found between the ratings of PhD and PsyD students' supervision.

Doctoral Students' Perceived Career Readiness

Towards the end of their doctoral studies, students from all programs felt more prepared to enter a career in clinical work than academia, $t(871) = 24.72$, $p < .01$. Although participants felt that they were generally well-equipped to obtain a employment in clinical settings, they reported that they had received significantly less training for delivering services in a managed care environment, $t(875) = 28.65$, $p < .01$, and conducting the business aspects of clinical practice, $t(877) = 54.86$, $p < .01$. This preparation deficit was particularly true for Clinical and Counseling PhD students (see Table 2).

References

Hall, R. G. (Ed.). (1998). APPIC directory to internship and postdoctoral programs in professional psychology (27th ed.). Washington, DC: Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers.

Meyers, S. A., Reid, P. T., & Quina, K. (1998). Ready or not, here we come: Preparing psychology graduate students for academic careers. Teaching of Psychology, 25, 124-126.

Tibbits-Kleber, A. L., & Howell, R. J. (1987). Doctoral training in clinical psychology: A students' perspective. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 18, 634-639.

Table 1

Mean Scores and One-Way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) for Sat

Variable	Clinical PhD		C
	M	SD	
			Course
Assessment	4.03a,b	0.88	4
Psychotherapy	3.75a,b	0.93	4
Research methods and statistics	3.96a	0.92	3
Ethics	3.96a,b	0.92	4
Biological bases	3.51a,b	1.02	3
Cognitive-affective bases	3.64a	0.93	3
Social bases	3.46a	0.90	3
Personality/psychopathology	4.03a	0.85	4

isfaction Ratings as a Function of Degree Program

Clinical PsyD		Counseling PhD		F
M	SD	M	SD	
work				
.21c	0.81	3.63	0.88	23.88**
.20	0.72	3.95	0.82	22.68**
.10c	0.87	3.87	0.93	76.75**
.29	0.77	4.22	0.81	12.84**
.72c	0.86	3.28	0.97	11.25**
.98c	0.83	3.56	0.83	15.96**
.69	0.84	3.58	0.98	5.01**
.34c	0.74	3.93	0.92	16.46**

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Variable	Clinical PhD M	Clinical PhD SD	C
Cultural diversity	3.34a,b	1.11	3
Overall	33.78a	4.90	35
			Supervisi
Research work	4.04a	1.02	3
Clinical practica	4.27	0.83	4
Teaching	3.16	1.18	3
Predoctoral internship	4.37	0.91	4

Note. a = Means for Clinical PhD and Clinical PsyD are significantl
significantly different. c = Means for Clinical PsyD and Counseling
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

linical PsyD		Counseling PhD		F
M	SD	M	SD	
.99	0.92	4.08	1.03	42.95**
.72c	4.04	34.25	4.80	13.63**
on areas				
.61c	1.09	3.90	1.09	12.75**
.35	0.81	4.39	0.83	1.48
.22	1.39	3.23	1.14	0.20
.20	0.98	4.38	0.93	3.03*

y different. b = Means for Clinical PhD and Counseling PhD are

PhD are significantly different.

Table 2

Mean Scores and One-Way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) for Car

Variable	Clinical PhD		C
	M	SD	
Preparation for college teaching	3.24a	1.27	2
Preparation for academic career	3.54a	1.13	2
Preparation for clinical career	4.17a	0.84	4
Preparation for managed care environment	3.11a	1.15	3
Preparation for business aspects of practice	2.01a	0.99	2

Note. a = Means for Clinical PhD and Clinical PsyD are significantly

significantly different.

*p < .05. **p < .01.

eer Preparation Ratings as a Function of Degree Program

linical PsyD		Counseling PhD		F
M	SD	M	SD	
.68b	1.17	3.18	1.27	16.98**
.29b	0.95	3.30	1.10	111.29**
.56b	0.75	4.10	1.03	21.03**
.69b	1.01	3.01	1.04	29.16**
.59b	1.10	1.98	0.96	30.19**

different. b = Means for Clinical PsyD and Counseling PhD are